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Canada and the Peace

A SPEECH

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The Rt. Hon.

Sir Robert Laird Borden

K.C., P.C.

ON THE

TREATY OF PEACE

DELIVERED IN THE CANADIAN
HOUSE OF COMMONS ON
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1919.

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A Speech by Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Laird Borden, K.C., P.C., in the House of Commons on the Treaty of Peace, September 2, 1919.¹

Rt. Hon. Sir ROBERT BORDEN (Prime Minister): I beg to move the following resolution:—

Resolved, that it is expedient that Parliament do approve of the Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany (and the Protocol annexed thereto), which was signed at Versailles on the twenty-eighth day of June, nineteen hundred and nineteen, a copy of which has been laid before Parliament, and which was signed on behalf of His Majesty, acting for Canada, by the plenipotentiaries therein named, and that this House do approve of the same.

The Character of the War

He said: Mr. Speaker, we are still too near to the tremendous and terrible events through which the world has passed since August five years ago to realize fully their supreme significance in the world's history and their all-compelling influence upon the future destiny of humanity. The conflicts of a thousand years fade into relative insignificance when compared with this struggle in which for one or another purpose the entire manhood, and more than that, the entire womanhood, of the belligerent nations were engaged. This war numbers its dead by millions, and its maimed and wounded by tens of millions. It surpassed all previous conflicts in the extraordinary extent to which applied science and the control of mankind over the mighty forces of nature were brought into play for purposes of destruction. It overthrew and destroyed the most formidable and highly organized military power known in the world's history; it crumbled thrones, and sent kings and princes wandering as outcasts far from the places they once occupied; it tested, as never before, the courage and self-control of all the nations; and finally it seemed to shake the very foundations upon which organized society has slowly and, as we thought, securely, established itself during a score of centuries.

It was a war, not of armies but of nations; and yet if we mistake not it was something more. If we cannot perceive in its genesis an inevitable clash between two strongly opposed and mutually destructive ideals, and in its issue the triumph of reasoned justice and ordered liberty; if, out of its limitless sacrifice, mankind may not gain redemption from such unendurable horrors in the future, where can we see one ray of hope to lighten the pathway that lies before the nations?

Thirty-two Nations Adopt the Treaty

We are assembled to consider terms of peace which were presented to Germany after many anxious months of study and debate. Including the British Dominions,

(1) The Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany was signed at Versailles on June 28, 1919. A special session of Parliament was summoned on September 1, 1919, in order that the Canadian Government might submit the Treaty to Parliament before advising its ratification in respect of the Dominion of Canada.

who were given in the Peace Conference a place commensurate with the part they had taken in the war, there were thirty-two nations assembled on the 6th day of May last in the secret Plenary Session of the Peace Conference, at which those terms were unanimously adopted. I do not claim that there was no hesitation, or even that there was no protest. Probably there was not a single nation whose representatives were absolutely satisfied with every disposition contained in the Treaty. I do not except the representatives of Canada from that sweeping assertion. But there was the great outstanding fact that thirty-two nations of varying and sometimes conflicting ideals and aspirations, widely divergent in status, in power, and in political development, and separated sometimes by ancient antagonisms and long-standing jealousies, did finally give their undivided assent to a Treaty which, whatever its imperfections may be, was designed in all sincerity to assure the future peace of the world.

Pledged to Parliament to Submit Treaty

Whatever doubt may exist in other cases, it is unquestionable that this Treaty should be submitted to Parliament for its consideration and approval before ratification on behalf of Canada takes place. The formal ratification is, of course, in the name of the Sovereign; but in giving that ratification on behalf of Canada, His Majesty necessarily acts at the instance of his constitutional advisers in this country. We gave our pledge to submit this Treaty to Parliament before ratification, and that pledge is now fulfilled. There is the greatest urgency for securing ratification at the earliest possible moment. The period within which Germany shall carry out many of her undertakings under the terms of the Treaty dates from the period of ratification by three of the Allied Powers. The words of the Treaty in that regard are as follows:—

A first procès-verbal of the deposit of ratifications will be drawn up as soon as the Treaty has been ratified by Germany on the one hand, and by three of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers on the other hand. From the date of this first procès-verbal the Treaty will come into force between the High Contracting Parties who have ratified it. For the determination of all periods of time provided for in the present Treaty this date will be the date of the coming into force of the Treaty.

It is anticipated that two others of the Powers referred to will ratify within a very short time, and we have been urgently requested to use every possible expedition in having the Treaty considered by the Parliament of Canada. I hope, therefore, that the resolution which I propose may be passed, if the House approves, with the least possible delay. The Bill, which makes provision for carrying into effect the terms of the Treaty so far as Canada is concerned, will afford the opportunity for such further debate as may be desired.

A Stern but Just Peace

Before proceeding to give a brief summary of the Treaty, which has been laid upon the Table of the House, it is fitting to recall for a moment the dark days through which we passed in the years that are behind us, to remember that irretrievable disaster seemed more than once to wait on the threshold of the Allied Nations, and to acknowledge our profound thankfulness that the peace we are now to consider is founded upon victory and not upon defeat; fitting, also, to renew and emphasize our grateful acknowledgment of the indomitable valour of the Allied Armies which made that victory possible, and to recall with solemn pride the glorious achievements of our own heroic Army.

Speaking of the general aspects of the Treaty, I do not deny that its terms are severe and even stern; but, stern as they are, they do not fill the measure of the crime

which brought horror and disaster upon humanity. The military autocracies of the Central Powers were undoubtedly the immediate instruments that brought the scourge of this war upon mankind. But can we forget, ought we to forget, that so long as the fortunes of war seemed to smile upon them, the policy of world domination which forced this war commanded the approval and support of the enemy nations? Those who have passed from the inconceivable devastation and destruction of France and Belgium to the smiling and untouched countryside of Germany are not wont to regard the terms of this Treaty as unduly severe.

Summary of the Treaty

Coming more in detail to its terms, it defines the boundaries of Germany, restoring to France the lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, which were torn from her nearly half a century ago, and to the newly established Polish Republic the large and important territories acquired by Germany through the dismemberment of that country. The intermixture of German and Polish races in the eastern portions of the former German Empire necessitated elaborate and complex provisions, establishing Dantzic as a free city, and giving to the inhabitants of certain districts the right to determine by vote their future national status. Territory of less extent and importance has been ceded by Germany to the new Czecho-Slovak state.

The Treaty also revises the boundaries of Belgium and establishes a new system of government for Luxemburg and the Saar basin. Possible additions of territory to Denmark are provided for, and Germany has been placed under obligation to recognize the independence of German-Austria. Germany has been deprived of all her colonial possessions. She has been subjected to severe restrictions as to the armaments which she shall be allowed to maintain on land, on sea, or in the air. Tribunals have been created for the trial of persons upon whom rests the primary responsibility for the war, or who have committed acts in violation of the laws and usages of war. To the extent of her resources Germany has been required to undertake reparation and restitution for the destruction and ruin which her mad ambition has occasioned. The Treaty provides for international control of certain ports, railways, rivers, and canals. It embodies elaborate financial and economic provisions to which further reference will be made, and finally it establishes guarantees for the execution of the Treaty and for assuring the future peace of the world.

Alsace-Lorraine and Poland restored

So far as Alsace-Lorraine is concerned there is little need of argument. Those provinces, predominantly French in sentiment and thoroughly desirous of remaining French in their national status, were wrested by force and against their will from France fifty years ago. This barbarous and historic injustice has now been redressed and the lost provinces are once more joined to their parent state. The Allied Nations—I shall use the term "Allied" for brevity in speaking of the Allied and Associated Powers—have also made good to the people of Northern Schleswig the promise which Prussia gave in 1866 and which ever since has been constantly violated. These people will now have the opportunity of expressing by a free vote their desire for reunion with their motherland.

The emancipation of Poland and its establishment as a free and independent nation, with access to the sea, have commanded the approval of the world. The

difficulties in securing such a delimitation of territory as would afford access to the sea, and at the same time would not do violence to national affiliations and sentiments, were extreme; and they have involved very elaborate and complicated provisions, which have received the closest study and consideration, which may not prove completely satisfactory in their operation, but which, on the whole, are the best that could be devised. In this, as in every instance, adequate safeguards have been provided for protecting the rights of minorities and assuring to them freedom of conscience and security of person and property.

The Saar Valley Coalfields

In all his systematic destruction of property and of all indicia of civilization and progress, the German was never more thorough than in the ruin which he wrought on the coalfields of Northern France. It was the definite and fixed purpose of the German Government so to paralyse French industry by confiscation or destruction of industrial plants and by the wanton ruin of French coalfields, that French industry could never again raise its head in competition with Germany. No one would question the need of both restitution and punishment for such crimes. The means and the method were the subject of long debate and grave consideration. Finally the coalfields of the Saar Basin, which has hitherto been German territory, have been placed under a Commission to be appointed by the League of Nations, which will in effect govern the district for fifteen years. Necessary safeguards have been provided for assuring to the people their religious liberty, their language, and their schools. The coalfields are placed at the disposition of France. At the end of fifteen years the people are to determine by plebiscite whether they desire to remain under the League of Nations or to be transferred to France or to Germany. In the latter case the French mines within the district will be transferred to Germany upon the payment of suitable compensation to be credited on the reparation account.

The provisions for the destruction of Heligoland and for the internationalization of the Kiel Canal are obviously just, and I need not dwell upon them.

The German Colonies

To deprive Germany of her entire colonial empire was a stern though just measure. The world's future peace imperatively demanded this action. No effective attempt at colonization had been made by the Germans; their purpose was purely exploitation and commercial advantage. They had been guilty of barbarous and relentless cruelty and oppression in their dealings with the natives. There was abundant evidence, especially in German Southwest Africa, that the native tribes who had shown themselves friendly to the Allies would have been exterminated if German power had been again restored. And there was no illusion as to the future policy of Germany if these colonies should be retained. Strongly fortified naval bases as strategic points, with all the facilities for a submarine warfare far beyond anything hitherto attempted, would have been established within a few years. In their confident anticipation of victory the public men of Germany were perfectly candid as to other future intentions. German organization would be equal to the task of training, disciplining, and arming vast bodies of native troops by whose aid the entire African continent could be subdued, and whose power might even be brought to bear in other theatres of war. So Germany was called upon to renounce her colonial possessions in favour of the Allied Powers. But the

Allied Nations have placed upon themselves a self-denying ordinance under which these territories are to be developed in the interest and for the benefit of the world at large, and especially of the races which inhabit them. Until such races are capable of self-government the territories in question are to be administered by Mandatory Powers, subject to the supervision and control of the League of Nations.

Financial and Economic Clauses

The financial clauses embodied in Part IX of the Treaty contain provisions respecting the allocation of the debt of the German Empire as it stood on August 1, 1914, among the Powers to which German territory is ceded. It is provided that France, in respect of Alsace and Lorraine, shall be exempt from any such payment, inasmuch as in 1871 Germany refused to undertake any portion of the burden of the French debt. In respect of former German territories to be administered by a Mandatory under Article XXII of the League of Nations Covenant, neither the territory nor the Mandatory Power is to be charged with any portion of the debt of the German Empire or States. The remaining dispositions of Part IX are chiefly in aid of the general provisions for reparation which are set forth in Part VIII, and to which further reference will be made.

The economic clauses embodied in Part X of the Treaty are very elaborate, and I shall attempt no more than a short summary. They entitle the Allied Nations to most-favoured-nation treatment in respect of customs duties and in respect of natural products and manufactured articles exported from German territory to any of the Allied countries. They contain provisions to prevent unfair competition by Germany. They declare that Germany shall not subject the nationals of the Allied Powers to any prohibition, regulation, restriction, or tax in regard to the exercise of occupations, professions, trade, or industry which shall not be applicable to all aliens; and they make provision as to the continuation of certain international conventions and agreements. Section III of Part X contains elaborate dispositions as to the collection and payment of debts due from or to German nationals to or from the nationals of any of the Allied States.

The user of and the rights in ports, waterways, and railways wholly or partly within the territory of the former German Empire are regulated by elaborate provisions which are set forth in Part XII of the Treaty, and which do not seem to require special observation.

Disarmament of Germany

Apart from the security afforded by the Covenant of the League of Nations, safeguards against future aggression on the part of Germany are established in Part V, which places severe restrictions upon the military and naval power of that country. It is provided that within a very short time the German army shall be reduced to not more than one hundred thousand men, who are to be recruited by voluntary enlistment for a term of twelve years. Germany undertakes to abolish compulsory military service. The Treaty imposes a definite limit to the amount of arms, munitions, and materials which she is permitted to maintain. No arsenals or factories for the production of munitions of war, except such as are approved by the Allied Powers, are permitted. All warlike material, arms, and munitions of war in excess of certain stipulated quantities are to be handed over to the Allied Powers. The manufacture,

importation, and use of poisonous gases and other similar barbarous devices are prohibited. All fortifications except on the southern and eastern frontiers are to be dismantled. The German navy is to be reduced to very small proportions, as set out in Article 181 of the Treaty. The total personnel of the navy is restricted to 15,000, and is to be maintained only by voluntary enlistments. The building and maintenance of submarines are prohibited. On the North Sea and on the Baltic, the naval fortifications are to be dismantled, and no military or naval air services are permitted. The fulfilment of these stipulations is to be ensured by the appointment of Inter-Allied Commissions of Control to which the German Government shall give all necessary facilities for the accomplishment of their missions. There is an express provision that within three months after the Treaty comes into force the German laws must be modified and maintained by the German Government in conformity with the stipulations which I have summarized.

Reparation by Germany

I come now to the provisions for reparation, which demand a somewhat fuller explanation. They are set forth in Part VIII of the Treaty. In the first place the Allied and Associated Governments affirm, and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her Allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her Allies. Then follows the recognition by the Allied Governments that the resources of Germany are not adequate to make complete reparation. Germany, therefore, is required and undertakes to make compensation for all damage done to the civilian populations of the Allied Powers and their property. The amount of compensation so payable is defined in a series of schedules or annexes according to certain enumerated categories of damage. These categories cover damage of every character to property by bombardment whether from land, sea, or air; they embrace pensions to naval and military victims of the war, including members of the Air Force, whether mutilated, wounded, sick or invalided, and to the dependents of such victims. The amount due to the Allied Governments will be calculated for each of them as being the capitalized cost of such pensions and compensation at the date when the Treaty is ratified, and on the basis of the scale in force in France at that date. It is obvious that the scale of compensation payable by Germany in respect of pensions must be uniform, and the French scale was accepted as a fair basis by the other Allies. The amount eventually payable by Germany, and the method by which she shall pay, are to be determined by a Reparation Commission which is to be set up by the Allied Powers, and which is invested with very wide authority in dealing with the general question and interpreting the provisions of the Treaty with respect thereto. Special provision is made for the reimbursement to Belgium of all sums borrowed by her from the Allied Governments up to the date of the Armistice.

Method of Payment

Article 235 provides that Germany shall pay in such instalments and in such manner, whether in gold, commodities, ships, securities, or otherwise, as the Reparation Commission may fix during 1919, 1920, and the first four months of 1921, the equivalent of twenty billion gold marks. Out of this sum the expenses of the Armies of Occupation subsequent to the Armistice shall first be met, and such supplies of food and raw

material as are deemed essential to enable Germany to meet her obligations for reparation may also be paid out of the above sum. The balance shall be reckoned towards liquidation of the amounts due for reparation. Germany is also to deposit bonds by way of security and in acknowledgment of her debt as follows: First, to be issued forthwith, twenty billion marks gold bearer bonds payable not later than May 1, 1921, without interest. Second, a further issue of forty billion marks gold bearer bonds bearing interest for five years at $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent and thereafter at 5 per cent. Third, a further instalment of forty billion marks gold 5 per cent bearer bonds, the time and mode of payment of principal and interest to be determined by the Commission. The entire obligation of Germany as fixed by the Commission shall be discharged within thirty years from May 1, 1921, according to a schedule of payments which the Commission is to draw up. All reparation payments received from Germany are to be distributed among the Allied Nations upon an equitable basis, and in accordance with the amount of their respective claims.

Punishment of War Crimes

Part VII of the Treaty provides for penalties, and its provisions may be summarized as follows: The Allied Powers publicly arraign William the Second of Hohenzollern, formerly German Emperor, for a supreme offence against international morality and the sanctity of treaties. A special tribunal will be constituted to try him, composed of five judges, one appointed by each of the five Allied Powers, who will address a request to the Government of the Netherlands for the surrender of the ex-Emperor in order that he may be put on trial. Further, the German Government recognizes the right of the Allied Powers to bring before military tribunals persons accused of having committed acts in violation of the laws and customs of war. Such persons, if found guilty, shall be sentenced to punishments laid down by law. The German Government agrees to hand over to the Allied Powers all persons charged with having committed such acts.

The League of Nations Covenant

As far back as the dawn of history men have been conscious of the evils of war, and from the earliest times war-wearied nations have held high hopes of a future in which war should cease. Such to-day is the universal aspiration of mankind. That aspiration is founded, not only upon ideals of liberty and justice, but upon the instinct of self-preservation. No continent and no nation can hope to hold itself aloof from the varied and vast activities of the world. Nature's forces are at the command of mankind, and modern means of transportation and communication have made every nation a near neighbour of every other. The first line of defence of any country may be on some far-off continent or distant ocean. There is an established community of national life throughout the world. The enthronement and enforcement of international law must rest upon the faith of the nations just as ordered liberty and justice within each state depend upon the public opinion of its people. Upon each nation is imposed a responsibility commensurate with its power and influence. Unless that responsibility is accepted and fulfilled the peace of the world cannot be maintained. At Paris the representatives of thirty-two nations took upon themselves the task of establishing upon just ideals a League for the enforcement of international right and for the prevention of future war, so far as that may be humanly possible. Since the terms of the Covenant

were made public some months ago they have been subjected in each country to keen analysis and sometimes to fierce criticism. No one would pretend that the Covenant is a perfect instrument or that it affords an absolute guarantee against future wars. Its most sanguine advocates have made no such claim. Above all waves of criticism stands the solid rock of a Covenant, founded upon the solemn and unanimous affirmation of thirty-two of the world's nations, that not force but right and justice shall be the arbiter of international disputes, that war is not a reasonable, just, or recognized method of determining controversies between States, and that each of the thirty-two Signatory Nations binds itself to the maintenance and enforcement of these eternal principles.

Effect of the Covenant

No nation shall resort to the arbitrament of arms until its quarrel has been submitted to the Council of Nations or to an International Court of Justice. Any nation failing to respect this just obligation is subject in the first place to be treated as an international outlaw and placed under a commercial and economic ban. Thereafter it is liable to such punishment through naval and military measures as may compel an observance of the obligation imposed upon it by the Covenant. The League of Nations further contemplates effective provisions for preventing trade with uncivilized races in noxious drugs, intoxicating liquors, and munitions of war. It is to establish safeguards against the white-slave traffic. It provides effective means for that direct and intimate consultation and discussion which are so necessary for a true understanding and settlement of international difficulties. The Canadian Delegates took exception both in form and in substance to certain of its original provisions. Our views were set forth in a confidential memorandum which I circulated to the members of the Commission who drafted the Covenant and to the representatives of the five great Allied Powers. Many of our objections were met in the revised draft; and as to the others we felt that, important as we regarded them, they ought not to be accounted of moment in comparison with the supreme purpose embodied in the Covenant.

International Labour Organization

Side by side with the Covenant stand the provisions of the Labour Convention. It was my privilege to attend the earlier meetings of the Commission which framed the Articles on that subject now embodied in Part XIII of the Treaty. At one of these meetings the Preamble of the Labour Convention was framed. It is as follows:—

Whereas the League of Nations has for its object the establishment of universal peace, and such a peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice;

And whereas conditions of labour exist involving such injustice, hardship and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperilled; and an improvement of those conditions is urgently required: as, for example, by the regulation of the hours of work, including the establishment of a maximum working day and week, the regulation of the labour supply, the prevention of unemployment, the provision of an adequate living wage, the protection of the worker against sickness, disease and injury arising out of his employment, the protection of children, young persons and women, provision for old age and injury, protection of the interests of workers when employed in countries other than their own, recognition of the principle of freedom of association, the organization of vocational and technical education and other measures;

Whereas also the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries;

The High Contracting Parties, moved by sentiments of justice and humanity, as well as by the desire to secure the permanent peace of the world, agree to the following :

Subsequently, I was charged with the duty of bringing together representatives of the important industrial Powers and of endeavouring to reconcile certain divergencies of view in respect of the affirmation of General Principles which have already been under discussion in this House. Those Principles were adopted upon my motion at the Peace Conference in the following form:—

The High Contracting Parties, recognizing that the well-being, physical, moral and intellectual, of industrial wage-earners is of supreme international importance, have framed, in order to further this great end, the permanent machinery provided for in Section I and associated with that of the League of Nations. They recognize that differences of climate, habits and customs, of economic opportunity and industrial tradition, make strict uniformity in the conditions of labour difficult of immediate attainment. But, holding as they do, that labour should not be regarded merely as an article of commerce, they think that there are methods and principles for regulating labour conditions which all industrial communities should endeavour to apply, so far as their special circumstances will permit.

Among these methods and principles, the following seem to the High Contracting Parties to be of special and urgent importance :

First : The guiding principle above enunciated that labour should not be regarded merely as a commodity or article of commerce.

Second : The right of association for all lawful purposes by the employed as well as by the employers.

Third : The payment to the employed of a wage adequate to maintain a reasonable standard of life as this is understood in their time and country.

Fourth : The adoption of an eight hours day or a forty-eight hours week as the standard to be aimed at where it has not already been attained.

Fifth : The adoption of a weekly rest of at least twenty-four hours, which should include Sunday wherever practicable.

Sixth : The abolition of child labour and the imposition of such limitations on the labour of young persons as shall permit the continuation of their education and assure their proper physical development.

Seventh : The principle that men and women should receive equal remuneration for work of equal value.

Eighth : The standard set by law in each country with respect to the conditions of labour should have due regard to the equitable economic treatment of all workers lawfully resident therein.

Ninth : Each State should make provision for a system of inspection in which women should take part, in order to ensure the enforcement of the laws and regulations for the protection of the employed.

Without claiming that these methods and principles are either complete or final, the High Contracting Parties are of opinion that they are well fitted to guide the policy of the League of Nations; and that, if adopted by the industrial communities who are members of the League, and safeguarded in practice by an adequate system of such inspection, they will confer lasting benefits upon the wage-earners of the world.

Annual Labour Conference

These General Principles and the Preamble above quoted constitute together a basis upon which international regulation of labour conditions shall proceed. Upon them the Magna Charta of labour throughout the world will be founded in the years to come.

The Labour Convention provides that the original Members of the League of Nations shall be the original Members of the Labour Convention.

It provides for a permanent organization consisting of a General Conference of representatives of the adherent nations and of an International Labour Office controlled by a Governing Body. Each adherent nation is entitled to send four representatives to the General Conference, which is to be held at least once in each year. Of these representatives two shall be Government Delegates and two others shall be Delegates representing, respectively, the employers and the workpeople. The Con-

ference is entitled to frame proposals which may take the form of a recommendation to be submitted to the adherent nations or of a draft international convention for ratification by each such nation. It is incumbent upon each Government concerned to place any such proposal before the proper legislative authority for its consideration. There are also provisions for inquiry into any alleged grievance or injustice. The first meeting has been convened for the 29th of October next, and it is to be held at Washington.

Services of British Empire Delegates

The immense labours and responsibilities which devolved upon the British Plenipotentiaries, and especially upon Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Balfour, can only be realized by those who were intimately associated with them in the labour of the Peace Conference. When the time comes for a fuller history of the events at Paris between the middle of January and the end of June, there will be an even warmer appreciation and recognition of their service to the Empire and to the world. Nor should I omit a tribute to the representatives of the other Dominions, with whom the Canadian Delegates always worked in absolute co-operation and understanding.

It was my privilege to have very intimate relations with General Botha, whose service to his country and to the whole empire has been so splendid and so conspicuous, and whose loss is universally deplored.

I desire further to place on record also my grateful acknowledgment of the invaluable assistance of those of my colleagues who were associated with me in the representation of Canada at the Conference; also to my colleagues in Ottawa, with whom we were in very close communication on questions of doubt or difficulty.

Services of Canadian Officials

I should not omit to mention the valuable assistance which my colleagues and I received from Mr. Lloyd Harris, Chairman of the Canadian Mission in London; Mr. Frank P. Jones, Vice-Chairman of the Canadian War Trade Board; and Dr. James W. Robertson as representative of the Department of Agriculture. During a portion of the time Mr. P. M. Draper aided us with useful advice and suggestions respecting labour questions. The services of Lieutenant-Colonel Oliver Mowat Biggar, Judge Advocate-General, and Mr. Loring C. Christie, Legal Adviser of the Department of External Affairs, were especially notable. They filled highly important positions on several committees of the Peace Conference, and discharged responsible duties in connection with the British Empire Delegation. Their services received very warm appreciation from Sir Ernest Pollock, Solicitor General of England, and from Sir Maurice Hankey, British Secretary General of the Peace Conference.

The Dominions and the Terms of Peace

I now come to consider the character of the representation secured by Canada at the Conference, her position as a Signatory of the Treaties concluded there, and her status as a Member of the League of Nations and of the International Labour Convention. Early in the war it had been announced in the various Parliaments of the Empire that the Dominions would be fully consulted concerning the terms of peace. The sessions of the Imperial War Cabinet held in the spring of 1917 and in the summer of 1918 afforded in a certain measure the means for the carrying out of this understand-

ing. Before leaving Great Britain for Canada on the 17th August, 1918, I had been actively engaged as a member of a Committee of the Imperial War Cabinet, the constitution and purpose of which were somewhat notable. This Committee had its genesis in a very frank and full discussion which I initiated in the Imperial War Cabinet immediately after my arrival in June, 1918. The whole issue involved was relegated for consideration to a Committee consisting of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the Prime Ministers of the Dominions, General Smuts representing General Botha. The Committee called into consultation the Secretary of State for War, the Chief of the General Staff and the highest military experts from the more important theatres of war. Its duty was to determine what further effort was necessary to win the war according to the views of these experts, who were also asked to express their opinions as to the place where and the time when the supreme effort should be made and the conditions under which it should be attempted. An elaborate report was prepared which, however, was superseded within a few weeks by the rapid and wholly unexpected march of events.

Dominion Representation at Peace Conference

Shortly before the Armistice the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom strongly urged that I should arrive in London as soon as possible, and with three of my colleagues I left Ottawa on the 8th November last. The status of the Dominions at the Peace Conference came immediately into question and was the subject of earnest discussion. Various methods, which it is not necessary to explain, were suggested. In the end I proposed that there should be a distinctive representation for each Dominion similar to that accorded to the smaller Allied Powers, and in addition that the British Empire representation of five Delegates should be selected from day to day from a panel made up of representatives of the United Kingdom and the Dominions. This proposal was adopted by the Imperial War Cabinet. Early in December preliminary conversations on the making of peace took place in London between representatives of the British Empire, of France, and of Italy, and the proposal which I had already put forward was accepted in principle. The Preliminary Peace Conference began at Paris on January 12, 1919, and the question of procedure, including that of representation, was immediately taken up by the representatives of the principal Allied and Associated Powers, afterwards commonly known as the Council of Ten. At first strong objection was made to the proposed representation of the British Dominions. Subsequently there was a full discussion in the British Empire Delegation, at which a firm protest was made against any recession from the proposal adopted in London. In the end that proposal was accepted.

Effective Position of the Dominions

The adoption of the panel system gave to the Dominions a peculiarly effective position. At Plenary Sessions there were sometimes three Canadian Plenipotentiary Delegates, two as representatives of Canada and one as representative of the Empire. Moreover, throughout the proceedings of the Conference the Dominion Delegates, as members of the British Empire Delegation, were thoroughly in touch with all the proceedings of the Conference, and had access to all the papers recording its proceedings. This enabled them effectively to watch and check those proceedings in the interest of their respective Dominions, and placed them in a position of decided advantage. Dominion ministers were nominated to and acted for the British Empire on the principal

Allied Commissions appointed by the Conference from time to time to consider and report upon special aspects of the Conditions of Peace. The Canadian ministers acted as the principal representatives of the British Empire on these Commissions as follows:—

Commission on Greek Questions, Sir Robert Borden (Vice-President).

Economic Commission, Sir George Foster (Vice-President).

Commission on the International Control of Ports, Waterways, and Railways, Hon. A. L. Sifton (Vice-President).

Sub-Commission on Pre-War Contracts, Hon. C. J. Doherty (Chairman).

Supreme Economic Council, Sir George Foster, with Mr. Sifton and Mr. Doherty as alternates, was on the panel from which the British Empire representation was chosen from time to time.

Council of Five—Council of Four

On several occasions I was charged with the duty of attending as one of the British Empire representatives on the Council of Five. Mr. Lloyd George called upon me to put forward before the Council of Four the British Empire case in respect of the clauses on economic questions, on the International Control of Ports, Waterways, and Railways, and on Submarine Cables. During the last month of my stay in Paris I acted regularly as Chairman of the British Empire Delegations in the absence of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, whose duties as a member of the Council of Four constantly prevented his attendance.

Dominions as Signatories—Dominion Plenipotentiaries

It is desirable to note an important development in constitutional practice respecting the signature of the various Treaties concluded at the Conference. Hitherto it has been the practice to insert an article or reservation providing for the adhesion of the Dominions. In view of the new position that had been secured, and of the part played by Dominion representatives at the peace table, we thought this method inappropriate and undesirable in connection with the Peace Treaty. Accordingly, I proposed that the assent of the King as High Contracting Party to the various Treaties should, in respect of the Dominions, be signified by the signature of the Dominion Plenipotentiaries, and that the Preamble and other formal parts of the Treaties should be drafted accordingly. This proposal was adopted in the form of a memorandum by all the Dominion Prime Ministers at a meeting which I summoned, and was put forward by me on their behalf to the British Empire Delegation, by whom it was accepted. The proposal was subsequently adopted by the Conference, and the various Treaties have been drawn up accordingly, so that the Dominions appear therein as Signatories, and their concurrence in the Treaties is thus given in the same manner as that of other nations.

This important constitutional development involved the issuance by the King, as High Contracting Party, of Full Powers to the various Dominion Plenipotentiary Delegates. In order that such Powers issued to the Canadian Plenipotentiaries might be based upon formal action of the Canadian Government, an Order in Council was passed on April 10, 1919, granting the necessary authority. Accordingly, I addressed a communication to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom requesting that necessary and appropriate steps should be taken to establish the connection between this Order in Council and the issuance of the Full Powers by His Majesty, so that it might formally appear of record that they were issued on the responsibility of the Government of Canada.

Dominions as Members of League of Nations.

The new and definite status of the Dominions at the Peace Conference is further manifested in the constitution of the League of Nations. Since they had enjoyed the same status at the Peace Conference as that of minor Powers, we took the ground that the Dominions should be similarly accepted in the future international relationship contemplated by the League. The League of Nations Commission, while inclined to accept this in principle, did not at the outset accept all its implications, as was apparent in the first draft of the Covenant. This document, however, was professedly tentative. The Dominions' case was pressed, and in the final form, as amended and incorporated in the Treaty of Peace with Germany, the status of the Dominions as to membership and representation in the Assembly and Council was fully recognized. They are to become Members as Signatories of the Treaty, and the terms of the document make no distinction between them and other Signatory Members. An official statement as to the true intent and meaning of the provisions of the Covenant in that regard was secured by me and is of record in the Archives of the Peace Conference.

Dominions as Members of International Labour Organization

A similar question arose in respect of the constitution of the International Labour Organization. Corresponding to the Council of the League there is a Labour Governing Body consisting of Delegates nominated by a limited number of governments. The original form of the Labour Convention did not adequately recognize the status of the Dominions, and at the Plenary Session of April 11, 1919, when a resolution was proposed that the Peace Conference approve of the Draft Convention, I moved that the resolution be amended by adding a provision which authorized the Drafting Committee to make such amendments as were necessary to have the Convention conform to the League of Nations in the character of its membership and in the method of adherence. As a result the Labour Convention was finally amended so that the Dominions were placed on the same footing as other Members of the International Labour Organization, becoming eligible like others to nominate their Government Delegates to the Governing Body.

Equality of Nationhood in Britannic Commonwealth

I hope the House will realize that the recognition and status accorded to the British Dominions at the Peace Conference were not won without constant effort and firm insistence. In all these efforts the Dominions had the strong and unwavering support of the British Prime Minister and his colleagues. The constitutional structure of the British Empire is imperfectly understood by other nations, even by a nation so closely allied in kinship, in language, and in the character of its institutions as the United States of America. Such lack of comprehension need excite no surprise, because the association between the Mother Country and the great self-governing Dominions has been for years in a condition of development, and that development is not yet complete. The future relationship of the nations of the Empire must be determined in accordance with the will of the Mother Country and of each Dominion in a constitutional Conference to be summoned in the not distant future. Undoubtedly it will be based upon equality of nationhood. Each nation must preserve unimpaired its absolute autonomy, but it must likewise have its voice as to those external relations which involve

the issue of peace or of war. So that the Britannic Commonwealth is in itself a community or league of nations which may serve as an exemplar to that world-wide League of Nations which was founded in Paris on the 28th of last June.

Basis of Canada's National Status

On behalf of my country I stood firmly upon this solid ground; that in this, the greatest of all wars, in which the world's liberty, the world's justice, in short the world's future destiny were at stake, Canada had led the democracies of both the American continents. Her resolve had given inspiration, her sacrifices had been conspicuous, her effort was unabated to the end. The same indomitable spirit which made her capable of that effort and sacrifice made her equally incapable of accepting at the Peace Conference, in the League of Nations, or elsewhere, a status inferior to that accorded to nations less advanced in their development, less amply endowed in wealth, resources, and population, no more complete in their sovereignty and far less conspicuous in their sacrifice.

I commend this Treaty to the consideration and approval of the Canadian Parliament, claiming not indeed that it has no imperfections, but that it does in truth embody terms consistent with honour and justice, and that the most earnest endeavour of those who framed it was to ensure the future peace of the world.

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